

# Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center

## *Kentucky Injury Facts*



### Tobacco Farming Injuries

April 2001

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations in the United States. In Kentucky, an analysis of 2930 agricultural injuries found that nearly one quarter of these occurred while working in tobacco (these exclude cases of Green Tobacco Sickness). The leading causes of injury were: Falls 28.5%, Cutting/piercing instruments 24.8%, Machinery 16.6%, and Overexertion 12.1%. The leading body parts injured during tobacco production were: Hand 25.0%, Shoulder/Arm 13.9%, Ankle/Foot 13.7%, and Head 12.5%.

#### **“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”**

The average hospital charge for the tobacco injuries was \$493. This did not include time lost from work, physician’s fees, follow-up visits, or rehabilitation costs. Many prevention measures are much less expensive than the costs of an injury.

#### **Prevention Strategies**

- ❖ Use leather chaps on lower legs and leather gloves with gauntlets on hands, especially during the harvest season.
- ❖ Install a ROPS (rollover protective structure) on your tractor and always wear your seatbelt. Do not allow extra riders on the tractor.
- ❖ Inspect barns before the harvest begins for loose/unsturdy rails. This can help prevent falls due to rails breaking or sliding.
- ❖ Know your limits. During hot weather drink plenty of water and take breaks when needed.
- ❖ **Think** about the tasks you, your family, and farm workers perform. Ask yourself “What about this task could cause an injury?” Then put this information to use by encouraging your family and farm workers to do the same. Many times we do a familiar task without thought. Farming is dangerous, and everyone on the farm needs to be alert and aware of the surrounding dangers.
- ❖ Contact your local agricultural extension agent to receive farm safety information. Also, safety materials in Spanish are available from your agent.

#### **Be Prepared**

Even a cautious, careful farmer may still encounter injuries on the farm due to the many hazards involved in tobacco farming. Have a first aid kit available at all times. A cellular phone can be useful, especially if you are working in remote areas. Plan to cover injury costs in your budget. If you hire younger workers, know the guidelines for the tasks they are allowed to perform on a farm. These guidelines are extremely important for their safety, and are legally binding.

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For more information, contact Donna Reed at 859-257-6711 or [dkreed2@pop.uky.edu](mailto:dkreed2@pop.uky.edu)

Find out more about ROPS at <http://www.marshfieldclinic.org/nfmc/rops/>

Guidelines for adolescents on farms can be found at <http://www.elaws.dol.gov/flsa/docs/hazag.asp> and <http://www.elaws.dol.gov/flsa/docs/hours.asp>

*Kentucky Injury Facts* is an ongoing series that describes preventable injuries in the Commonwealth. This information can be used as a guide for injury prevention programs, legislative initiatives, and policy development to ensure the health and safety of Kentuckians. Please share this information with others that may benefit from it.

Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center (KIPRC)  
University of Kentucky • Kentucky Department for Public Health

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